



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## THE SOCIAL SCIENTIST'S BIT

---

ROSS L. FINNEY

State Normal School, Valley City, North Dakota

---

It is impossible to overstate the importance of winning the war. The future of civilization depends upon it. Nothing must be allowed to detract attention from this great enterprise. But the fact that our first business is to win the war need not be stated in such a way as to imply that everything else can be postponed. For there are some other matters of such urgent and permanent importance that even the stress of war must not tempt us to neglect them. And there is no group of persons more capable of appreciating this fact than the readers of the *American Journal of Sociology*. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is in no danger of being misinterpreted: it is to point out and emphasize the importance of preparing now for the reconstruction that will follow the war.

For assuredly there will be a reconstruction. It will be essentially economic and social as well as political; and there are reasons for expecting that it will be as far-reaching and revolutionary as the war itself is vast and terrible. The reasons for expecting it must be as evident to sociologists now as the German imperial ambition was to historians five years ago. But for the sake of logical completeness it may not be amiss to enumerate them here.

The first but most superficial line of evidence is in the radical innovations that have been adopted as war measures. Conscription, an unprecedented income tax, price regulation of food and fuel, suspension of the manufacture of intoxicants, the shutting down of industry to relieve the fuel shortage, government control of railroads, compulsory arbitration of labor disputes, and the distribution of labor through federal agency, not to mention the scale of government expenditures, are familiar instances. And conservative-minded men are advocating other measures even more drastic. Now all of these measures mean problems to be solved

after the war. For example: Shall we turn the management of the railroads back to their owners, continue the *status quo*, or move on to government ownership? If the last, how shall we make payment, what about other natural monopolies, how prevent petty graft, insure efficient management, etc.? To the thoughtful reader similar problems will present themselves in connection with every other war measure. The war debt will not be the least of these problems. How, for instance, can we avoid a concentration of wealth such as resulted from payment of the Civil War debt? To make unprecedented industrial innovations during war time is a comparatively simple matter; but how to push the camel's nose out of the tent again when the war is over is likely to prove a problem of a different magnitude.

The second line of evidence pointing to portentous events is the strained relations and social unrest that have prevailed increasingly for a generation. How any person can recall the industrial history of the past five years without misgivings is hard to understand. Have we forgotten Lawrence, Paterson, Calumet, and Ludlow? Has the dust already settled on the *Report of the Industrial Relations Commission*? Have we forgotten how narrowly a universal railroad strike was averted twice during the last two years, the second time only by an insistent appeal to patriotism? Do we see no ominous symptoms in the phenomenal growth of the I.W.W.? Have we forgotten that even Gompers challenged: "Lay on, Macduff"? Whoever can hide his head in the sand in the presence of such symptoms is certainly possessed of a peace that passeth understanding. Who can doubt that the unrest of labor is being temporarily held in leash by a smart labor demand at high prices and the patriotic motive? But after the war there will be no appeal to patriotism in the old sense. And as for the labor demand, there are both business men and economists who fear that the war will be followed by a period of severer business depression than modern times record. If that should occur, unemployment and distress would ensue, and then the volcano would be liable to erupt.

However, no one comprehends the labor situation who sees in it only a series of local incidents. It must be viewed as a

world-movement; otherwise it cannot be adequately interpreted. German and French socialists, the Bolsheviki, the British Labor Party, the Sinn Feiners, and our own I.W.W.'s are all manifestations of the same universal phenomena. They differ not so much in their ultimate ends, which are avowedly socialistic, as in the relative sanity of their immediate program of means. The Bolsheviki, for example, are idealistic dreamers incapable of recognizing the actuality of cold facts, while the I.W.W.'s are dangerous advocates of utterly unnecessary violence. The British Labor Party, on the other hand, have their feet solidly on the ground, and are therefore most worthy of serious study as typical of the universal labor movement. Unlike the Bolsheviki, they realize the necessity of crushing Kaiserism; and they are accordingly loyally supporting their government in the war. Unlike the I.W.W.'s, they propose to leave their policy quietly to the decision of orderly elections, functioning afterward either as government or opposition, as the issue may decide. But in either case they will seek to overturn the old capitalistic régime and replace it with a socialistic industrial organization. Not, however, by any sudden revolution, but by a gradual extension of the precedents already set by a century of British labor reforms. All of which means that there is a rising flood of industrial democracy sweeping over the entire Western world. Captains of capitalistic industry see it. Charles M. Schwab is reported to have predicted recently that propertyless laborers are about to assert themselves in the control of the world's affairs, and that the sooner we recognize the fact the better for our country and the world. No doubt the masses themselves read the same signs of the times with a thrill of anticipation.

A third line of argument, and the most convincing, is the argument from social evolution; not the short run but the long run. The fact is we are passing through industrial changes as fundamental and epoch-making as any in the life of the race; more so than any in recorded history. The domestication of plants and animals lifted mankind out of the savage stage and placed him on the lower rungs of civilization. With that change recorded history began, so fundamental were its effects upon all social institutions. The domestication, so to speak, of steam, electricity, and bacteria

is destined to inaugurate commensurate social changes. The age of handicrafts is past; the machinofacture age is here. Science, inventions, and democracy are changing everything but the fixed stars and the Decalogue. Our world is as different from the world of Washington and Jefferson as their world was different from that of the Ojibways and the Iroquois. But we are still trying to use many of the social institutions of Washington's day, like a high-school boy in buster kilts. Gradually the change has been accumulating. The war in some of its aspects is a struggle between the old order and the new. For aught we know it may knock the props away from the old régime. Social reorganization, belated and delayed, is destined to come with a sweep and a rush when the war is over, and to assume proportions almost apocalyptic. The problems of a century, perhaps of ten centuries, are likely to crowd into a generation, or even into a decade. The future is pregnant with a higher civilization, as unpicturable to our imaginations as ours to the cave men. And even now the birth pains are begun. The destinies of countless millions of mankind, for centuries to come, are bound up in the issues of the Great Reconstruction, no less than in the issues of the Great War.

That unprecedented changes are just ahead will be readily believed. In fact the presentiment is almost universal. But unfortunately it is almost always accompanied with a sort of irresponsible, fatalistic optimism. Such a state of mind arises out of nothing but a superstitious ignorance of social cause and effect. If wishes were horses beggars might ride. As a matter of fact the world of tomorrow will be pretty much the kind of world that we succeed in making it; for the imminent changes are not merely unrealized hopes; they are problems for the social engineer. Indeed, they are much more than problems; they are incipient conflicts. Each problem involves a clash of interests, and cannot, therefore, be settled by scientific inquiry and disinterested debate alone, but is sure to develop into a tug of war. Nor are these problems unrelated; they tend to merge into one another, with the propertyless masses on one side and the organized beneficiaries of vested privilege on the other. Only the plausible philosophy which our industrial system, like every other, has secreted to

lubricate the friction it generates can blind us to the wide chasm that exists between these two contending groups. Injustices as grossly pagan as any the world has ever endured exist in our social order; and they are the more intolerable because our people have been indoctrinated with the creed of democracy from their mothers' breasts. On the other hand, what reason is there to expect the Hohenzollerns of American finance to yield their power or renounce their imperial ambitions? And let no one blind his eyes to the circumstances that are strengthening the fortifications of special privilege. All but the sleeping know that the conflict is irrepressible. We have no more reason in 1918 to be complacent over the social situation than we had to be complacent over the international situation in 1914. Had it not been a psychological impossibility we perhaps might, by entering the Great War at once, have accomplished the overthrow of autocracy before this. But now we shall pay God only knows how heavily for our blindness. And shall the Great Reconstruction likewise overtake us unprepared?

The core of the whole matter is this: Can the issue be kept from coming to blows? Can we by reason and justice settle our social problems, as problems, before they degenerate into a violent clash of interests? If we can, the reconstruction period will pass into history as a period of rapid, peaceful, and beneficent social evolution; but if we do not succeed, then there will ensue one of the most tragic periods in the history of mankind, and a hundred generations may pass across a stage lurid with fire and blood. The kind of world we bequeath our children's children unto the third and fourth generation hangs in the balance. It is as necessary to make democracy safe for the world as to make the world safe for democracy. And fate will throw the responsibility chiefly upon the great, intelligent, well-conditioned middle class. They are the natural arbitrators between social extremes. History shows, alas, that usually—as in Cromwell's time, and Lincoln's, and, yes, our own—they have been drawn into the maelstrom themselves. They have given their first-born sons for the sins of their souls. But for once let it not come to that. Can we not for once arbitrate with brains instead of blood?

But to succeed we must understand the problems involved. Successful social reconstruction can result only from applied social science, just as successful modern warfare depends upon physical science. And that science must be the possession of the people themselves, for they decide the issues of democracy. The people, especially the middle classes, must know enough about social science to read the signs of the times. Otherwise fatalistic optimism can never give place to an intelligent sense of responsibility. Poverty, ignorance, vice, squalor, sickness, and death must be revealed as facts. We must be disillusioned of the social philosophy that excuses them with plausible explanations. We must know enough to recognize justice and injustice when we see them; otherwise we can arbitrate nothing. And finally we must know enough social science to know the cures for social diseases, or at least to follow accredited scientific leaders instead of sociological quacks and political demagogues. In short, knowledge, definite sociological and economic knowledge, widely distributed among the people, is the preparedness absolutely necessary for the reconstruction.

But there's the rub! As a matter of fact the people are densely ignorant of social science. Such economic principles as have percolated into the lay mind are usually a century out of date, and are therefore utterly inapplicable to the modern machinofacture régime. Popular misconceptions of monopoly, labor, corporation finance, taxation, credit, tariff, immigration, etc., are as ludicrous as the eighteenth-century New England custom of applying a powder made of charred toads for the cure of skin diseases. Even the social point of view is absent; the old individualistic philosophy still dominates the popular mind. The *we*-fallacy is all but universal, and prosperity is shibboleth. Social justice is a term impossible to make a popular audience understand. And this accusation is especially applicable to the middle class who enjoy the prestige of prosperity, social standing, and education.

It may be interesting, and perhaps not irrelevant to our present purpose, to inquire the reasons for this ignorance. Probably the most fundamental reason is that this is a new country with abundant undeveloped resources. We have therefore been able to escape our economic problems by going west instead of solving them!

Probably the heterogeneity of our population has also increased our indifference, especially of late years. "Wops," "dagoes," "shenies," "chinks," and "niggers" do not excite our sympathies; therefore we see little need of padding the harness when it galls them. But the fault lies chiefly with our educational system. To date it is a monumental failure, so far as concerns the training of our citizenry for the responsibilities of citizenship. What little civics we have taught in our elementary schools has been formal, at least until very recently. We spend more time teaching the boys and girls how the globe was circumnavigated in 1519 than how the anti-trust law has been circumvented since 1890. And our high schools teach algebra, geometry, ancient history, and Latin, but almost no economics. Higher education has been prevented by the vogue of specialization from producing as much civic intelligence as it might have done. Most advanced scholars are obsessed by the ideal of productive scholarship, and are therefore liable to overlook the importance of what might be called distributive scholarship—a professional limp peculiarly inconsistent in a sociologist.

Meanwhile the social scientists are the key to the situation. Theirs is the opportunity and the responsibility of preparing for the social reconstruction by distributing their own kind of knowledge among the people. To put what social science we now possess where it can function is one of the greatest needs of democracy. Distributive scholarship is therefore the social scientist's bit in the present crisis. If every person who understands the social point of view and appreciates the necessity for preparedness will volunteer for this branch of the service, it may make an incalculable difference in the social achievement and progress of democracy during the next five centuries.

What can we do? Well, in the first place, sociologists can actively dispute the near-monopoly that psychologists have hitherto enjoyed in the guidance of educational theory. Psychology has tended to fortify the individualistic point of view in educational aims, contents, methods, and organization. The social point of view needs to be substituted. Educational sociology needs more active encouragement by all professional sociologists and economists. That will lead, among other good results, to a reconstruction of the elementary and secondary curriculums. That is coming,



but far too slowly. Social scientists should never lose an opportunity to plead for the extensive study of economics and sociology in high schools. The production of suitable textbooks will greatly aid this cause.

But that is not enough. The reconstruction will not wait for a generation of high-school graduates to be trained. More rapid means of disseminating the truth must be devised. Every student of social science, whether professional or amateur, must do what he can, and do it now. Those who teach should direct their teaching more explicitly toward preparedness for the reconstruction. Those who can write should offer to the popular press such compositions as they think will be available and useful. Occasions for public addresses should be improved, or even solicited, for spreading the sacred knowledge abroad. Ministers should be urged, in private conversation, in their assemblies, and through their denominational papers, to study social science and preach applied Christianity. Social-study classes should be organized in connection with Sunday schools, home missionary societies, women's clubs, and all sorts of voluntary organizations. Extension agencies, chautauquas, lyceums, etc., should be induced to retail social science in popular form. It might even be possible to convince some of the women that a mind well stored with social science will be worth as much to Uncle Sam in the long run as an extra pair of socks. Even the Gideons might be induced to read economics while they wait.

But if this sort of service is to be effectively rendered the enterprise must be organized. Such work cannot be done by isolated individuals; it must be given the prestige of some dignified and appropriate auspices and the efficiency of a comprehensive program. There ought to be an effective national organization back of this propaganda. It is hereby respectfully suggested, therefore, that the American Sociological Society take this matter up at its next annual meeting, with a view to co-operating with kindred societies in perfecting such an organization.

Obviously successful reconstruction cannot be achieved except on the basis of justice. But justice depends not only upon scientific knowledge of what is just and how to get it, but also upon a passionate desire to be just. It is not enough, as Plato vainly contended, that people know what is right; to furnish motive

power there must also be an abundant supply of what Kant called good-will. We need not only information but idealism, not only social science but social religion. We can never solve our social problems unless we understand the economic laws that govern them; but neither can we solve them unless our souls burn with the faith of the coming kingdom of God. To this end we need in America a great popular religious awakening, quickened by the social conception of the Gospel. We need it both to motivate the old morality upon which civilization is based and also to lay bare the new social sins of modern society. We need it to awaken the latent altruism in all our souls, to arouse the middle class from their blind lethargy, to conduct the beneficiaries of special privilege through the needle's eye, and to imbue the masses with patience. Except the age be born again it cannot see the kingdom of God.

Certainly such a plea cannot fall on deaf ears when addressed to American sociologists and social workers, so many of whom either were trained for the ministry, or, aspiring to it originally, turned to social work as a more promising field of religious service. As students of psychology, sociology, and history they understand the function of religion as a motive force in life. Let us all unite therefore in the devout prayer that there may sweep over this country a religious renaissance commensurate with the upheavals of the times. How many such revivals history records, and how profound their social effects have often been! Certainly the time is fully ripe again; indeed there are plenty of signs that it is all but here. It only awaits some devout and earnest group, like the Wesleys at Oxford, to set it going—sociologists, of course, for are not the dominant aims and thought of the age social? How easy it would be to organize an army of educated young men, burning with the hopes and aims of the social gospel, and send them out two by two into every corner of the land! To what sort of social good works might the converts of such a revival not be motivated. Ultimately the very institutions of society would be Christianized thereby. And only thus can our epochal problems be safely and permanently solved. "Deus vult!" Who will be Peter the Hermit for this crusade, and what gathering will prove to be the modern Council of Clermont?